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Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ As United Nations takes over from Multinational Force in Haiti, Secretary-General says Haitian people must take charge of their own destiny; urges international community to continue to support development and democracy through revitalization of multilateral ideal.

+ Security Council, in three resolutions, replaces UNPROFOR with separate but inter-linked peace-keeping operations in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

+ General Assembly extends MINUGUA mandate for six months; calls on Government of Guatemala and URNG to comply fully with commitments under Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights.

+ Secretary-General voices concerned about escalation of hostilities along Israeli-Lebanese border; urges parties to cease hostilities and to refrain from attacking civilian targets.

+ UNHCR expresses alarm at outflow of Rwandese refugees from camps in northern Burundi; calls on governments in region to respect principle of safe asylum.

+ ICRC expresses concern about appalling conditions in Rwanda's prisons; appeals to Government and international community to set up new places of detention to alleviate overcrowding.

+ Vienna Unit of Department for Development Support and Management Services launches two assistance projects for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, together with President Jean-Bertrand Aristide of Haiti and President Bill Clinton of the United States, today presided over ceremonies marking the transfer of command from the Multinational Force to the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH). In a

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statement, the Secretary-General stressed that the people of Haiti must maintain their commitment to rebuild their society, while Member States must continue to support the revitalization of the multilateral ideal.

Haiti was on the path to justice and reconciliation based on mutual respect, the Secretary-General said. The next great steps would be the upcoming legislative, local and presidential elections. The international community would assist in maintaining security, in reinforcing institutions and in promoting economic growth. However, it was up to the Haitian people to take charge of their own destiny.

At a luncheon this afternoon, the Secretary-General thanked President Clinton for the critical role his country had played in leading the Multinational Force. The United States, along with the international community, must remain involved in Haiti for the sake of democracy and development. At a dinner last night, President Aristide congratulated the Secretary-General on the achievements of the Multinational Force and UNMIH, and expressed confidence in the future. The Secretary-General highlighted the importance of the upcoming elections and the need for economic progress in Haiti.

The Force Commander of UNMIH is Major-General Joseph Kinzer of the United States. The Force has a troop strength of almost 5,800, and a headquarters staff of 172. More than 800 civilian police have arrived in Haiti, out of an authorized strength of 900.

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The Security Council today decided to replace the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) with separate but inter-li ed peace-keeping operations in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Council took that action by adopting three resolutions unanimously, in which it approved the arrangements recommended in the Secretary-General's report of 22 March.

Resolution 981 (1995) established the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO) until 30 November 1995. UNCRO will facilitate implementation of the Cease-Fire Agreement of 29 March 1994, the Economic Agreement of 2 December 1994, and relevant elements of the United Nations peace-keeping plan for Croatia. It will assist in controlling the crossing of military personnel and equipment over Croatia's international borders with Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro).

UNCRO will also facilitate the delivery of international humanitarian assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina through Croatian territory. It will be an interim arrangement to create conditions for a negotiated settlement consistent with Croatia's territorial integrity, and which guarantees the security and rights of all communities living in a particular area of Croatia.

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By resolution 982 (1995), the Council extended UNPROFOR's mandate in Bosnia and Herzegovina until 30 November 1995. It authorized the Secretary-General to redeploy all UNPROFOR personnel and assets from Croatia before 30 June, with the exception of those whose continued presence was required for UNCRO. UNPROFOR will retain its support structures and headquarters in Croatia. The Council reiterated the importance of compliance with the agreements between the Bosnian parties on a cease-fire and a cessation of hostilities. It called on the parties to extend those agreements beyond 30 April, and to negotiate an overall peace settlement using the Contact Group's peace plan as a starting point.

Finally, by resolution 983 (1995), the Council decided that UNPROFOR in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia would be known as the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP). The new Force will have the same responsibilities and composition as UNPROFOR had in the country, with a mandate until 30 November 1995.

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The General Assembly today extended the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Verification of Human Rights in Guatemala (MINUGUA) for another six months. It also called on the Government of Guatemala and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) to follow the Mission's recommendations and to comply fully with their commitments under the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights.

The Assembly reiterated the great importance of the early conclusion of the agreement on a firm and lasting peace in Guatemala. It urged the parties to make good on their commitment to give new momentum to the negotiating process.

Meanwhile, at a meeting in Mexico City, the Guatemalan Government and the URNG today signed an agreement on the identity and rights of indigenous people. The Secretary-General welcomed that encouraging development, and expressed the hope that the parties would build on it in working for a firm and lasting peace.

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The Secretary-General today said he was deeply concerned about the recent escalation of hostilities along the Israeli-Lebanese border, which had resulted in a number of civilian casualties on both sides. He urged all parties to cease hostilities and, in particular, to refrain from attacking civilian targets.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sadako Ogata, today expressed alarm at the outflow of some 45,000 Rwandese refugees from their camps in northern Burundi. She called on all governments in the region to respect the principle of safe asylum.

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The Rwandese refugees, frightened by deteriorating security conditions, began leaving the camps earlier in the week and headed towards the Tanzanian border. Magara camp, which previously sheltered some 40,000 people, was virtually abandoned. Meanwhile, large numbers of refugees -- mostly of Hutu origin -- left camps at Ruvumu, Majuri and Ntamba. Prior to those movements, the UNHCR had been sheltering some 200,000 Rwandese refugees in northern Burundi.

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The President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Cornelio Sommaruga, today expressed serious concern about the "appalling" conditions in Rwanda's prisons. He said that overcrowding had led to a steady deterioration in those conditions, and that the situation was become more critical every day. The prison population was growing by 1,500 every week, and some institutions now housed up to four inmates per square metre of floor space.

The ICRC President appealed to the Government of Rwanda and to the international community to set up new places of detention in order to alleviate the overcrowding. The rule of law and a functioning judicial system must be restored. He also called on all States parties to the Geneva Conventions to respect and ensure respect for international humanitarian law, and urged them to do everything possible to resolve the situation.

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The Reconstruction and Development Unit of the Department for Development Support and Management Services has launched a training programme for the staff of the Directorate in charge of restoring essential services to Sarajevo. It has also begun assisting the Government of Bosnia and Herzegovina in drawing up an economic recovery plan. The Vienna-based Unit has taken those actions in order to create a more efficient and effective plan for the reconstruction of the Bosnian capital.

Under the training programme, personnel from the Sarajevo Directorate are being instructed in the formulation of projects for submission to donors and the preparation of technical, financial and progress reports. Computers will be provided to establish a databank of viable projects. The programme is financed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The second project addresses the extensive destruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina's infrastructure and the almost complete disruption of its economy. Under that project, the Government, in consultation with the United Nations and other donors, is developing a priority programme for the resumption of essential services and a framework for short- and long-term recovery.

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